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## Exploration and Discovery.

DR. E. J. BANKS, Field Director of the Expedition (Babylonian Section) of the Oriental Exploration Fund of the University of Chicago, has made the following reports from Bismya:

### REPORT NO. 23.

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"BAGDAD, June 11, 1904.

"WE reached Bagdad June 1 by way of Affedj, Nippur, and Hillah. I arranged with Sheikh Selman to maintain eight watchmen at Bismya at an expense of one lira each per month, and he has given me a *sennet* or contract to protect the house and its contents, and to prevent digging at the ruins during my absence. Should he not keep this contract, he is responsible to the government, for a *sennet* is a thing of power among the Arabs. We then took boats for Affedj and the next morning visited Nippur.

"A comparison of Nippur with Bismya was of extreme interest to me. The ruins are almost identical in shape and are similarly divided by canals. At Nippur the temple is on the side of the canal; at Bismya, upon an island in it. Nippur is fully three times as high as Bismya, but Bismya is the greater in extent, and it is only along the southwestern border that it is a little higher than the desert level. At Nippur the ruins on the surface are comparatively modern; at Bismya, Sargonic and pre-Sargonic ruins are on the surface. At Nippur nine-tenths are post-Sargonic; at Bismya nine-tenths are pre-Sargonic. The bricks from Nippur are mostly square, or of late Babylonian origin; few are plano-convex. I did see three small bricks with two grooves. At Bismya there are few square bricks. Ninety per cent. are either plano-convex or grooved, showing that Bismya was a ruin before Nippur had risen to importance. At Nippur the canal and vegetation about may have assisted greatly in raising the general level of the land; at Bismya the sandstorms have worn away the ruins, and the desert level has changed but slightly since the earliest times. Consequently, the amount of work required to excavate at Nippur is many times greater, for the antiquities are deep and dirt must be carried to a greater distance; at Bismya the most ancient objects are on or near the surface, and the dirt, comparatively little in quantity, may be left near the excavations. I am confident that during the five months' work at Bismya as great a portion of the ruin has been excavated as the three expeditions to Nippur have

accomplished. An estimate that one-fifth of each ruin has been excavated would not be far out of the way. In results, we cannot expect to find objects in such large quantities as have been found at Nippur. Bismya has nothing post-Christian, no Parthian coffins, no Hebrew bowls, and but few late Babylonian tablets. Ninety per cent. of the objects of value found at Bismya are pre-Sargonic, therefore less in quantity, but greater in value.

"Excavations may be carried on at Nippur with the greatest ease. There are no sandstorms of importance, for the oldest trenches are not



FIG. 18.—A Group of El-Bedin Arabs.

filled. A deep trench in Bismya would be filled in a month. Nippur is surrounded by cultivated land, and good soft water is always at hand. At Bismya we are five miles from water, excepting that from our own well, and that is rapidly becoming bitter. There is only barren sand about us. The difference in temperature at the two ruins in summer time must be about  $15^{\circ}$ . Affedj close to Nippur has a good market and affords protection by people who are not quite Bedawi. At Bismya it is difficult to obtain money; provisions of all kinds are brought from a good distance, and all our dealings are with the most noted of the desert robber tribes, the El-Bedin. While Nippur is in a malarial district, I do not think that malaria at Bismya is possible.

"As we left Bismya, cholera was raging at Diwanieh and other places in the vicinity, and we escaped quarantine at Hillah by presenting a paper

stating that we had not touched at any infected places, and by the payment of a baksheesh. At Hillah it was very difficult to get a carriage to Bagdad, as people were trying to leave. Since then cholera has broken out at both Hillah and Bagdad.

"In Bagdad we have rented a house near the consulates. I am retaining Ahmud and the two servants whom I wish to take back to Bismya. Haidar Bey, the commissioner, has taken a house near by.

"You probably have long known the pronunciation of UD.NUN.KI. In the Brünnow which has just arrived I notice that it may be pronounced 'Adab,' and I am wondering if the name Adappa can be the same. I have no means of determining it here. It is certain that Bismya is not Isin; it may be Adappa."

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#### THE EVOLUTION OF THE BABYLONIAN BRICK.

"BISMYA presents an unusually rich collection of the bricks employed in the construction of its temple, palaces, and city wall. Already forty-three varieties have been discovered, and as the excavations progress the number will likely be somewhat increased. Apart from the mud bricks or *libbin*, common at every period and in every part of Mesopotamia, the bricks of Bismya may be roughly divided into three groups.

"The first of these consists of the so-called plano-convex bricks, flat on one side and rounded on the other, and not unlike a small flat loaf of baker's bread. Sometimes the corners are slightly rounded, and the upper side bears the marks of the workman's fingers as he shaped the soft clay in the mold before it was baked. Less frequently the upper surface bears the impression of a thumb to distinguish it from the bricks of earlier builders. The thumb impressions may be called the ancestor of the brick inscription. The material employed in the plano-convex bricks is rather coarse and is burned to a dark red color.

"The bricks of the second group are large, thin, and flat, or slightly convex, and on the upper side of each are one or more deep grooves formed by drawing the fingers across the soft clay. The grooves may run lengthwise along the center of the brick, or diagonally from an upper corner to a lower; or a second groove may be added, forming a St. Andrew's cross. Instead of a single groove, two, three, four, or even five grooves may run parallel to each other and in the same general directions as the single groove. The combinations which appear on the bricks from Bismya are represented in the accompanying diagrams; others may yet be discovered. That the grooves, varying in number and position as they do, have a purpose, there